

an important contribution to make, as will all countries in NATO. So the expansion of NATO will make it easier for us to defend the peace.

Q. Mr. President, thank you very much, indeed. It was a great pleasure to talk to you.

President's Upcoming Visit to Lithuania

The President. We'll see you in Vilnius.

Q. Thank you.

The President. It's going to be exciting for me.

Q. For us, too. We're waiting for that.

The President. I can't wait. Thanks. Make sure the weather is good, will you? [*Laughter*]

Q. Yes, we'll do our best. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was videotaped at 1:32 p.m. in the Library at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia. The transcript of this interview was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 21. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom and an Exchange With Reporters in Prague, Czech Republic November 21, 2002

President Bush. I'm really looking forward to visiting with the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Tony Blair. He's a friend; he's a strong leader. He and I are bound by the strong conviction that freedom belongs to everybody and that we're going to work together to make the world a more peaceful place.

I'm greatly disturbed by the news from the Middle East today. There's been yet another suicide bombing. It is clear that those who want to use terror to stop any process for peace are still active. In order to achieve peace, all countries in that region must be responsible for—take responsibility, do their best to fight off terror.

And I know the Prime Minister joins me as we mourn the loss of life. But we are going to continue to work toward peace in the Middle East. Two states living side by side in peace is the vision. And we will continue to work with those who share that vision—for the sake of the Israeli people and for the sake of the Palestinians.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Blair. Mr. President, first of all, we're pleased to see you again and exchange views on a range of issues that confront us at the moment. And I entirely agree with what you said a moment or two ago. Our thoughts are obviously with the victims of the latest terrorist outrage in Israel.

And the two things that are so clear is that, first of all, we need the action on security and action against terrorism, and secondly, to make progress in building a lasting peace in that region, based, as you say, on the two-state solution. It's an issue that I think—what is interesting is that the whole world wants to see us now, having—take this very firm stand against terrorism, against issues of weapons of mass destruction, but also try and make sure that we can provide a secure future with lasting peace in the Middle East. And I think those issues are all very much linked together.

President Bush. We'll take a question apiece. Greg [David Gregory, NBC News].

Germany-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, can you tell us if you've had a chance this week to speak with German Chancellor Schroeder yet?

President Bush. I did. I had a cordial meeting at that meeting last night. We greeted each other cordially.

Q. Can you give us an assessment of the state of U.S.-German relations in light of the recent election?

President Bush. It's a—Germany is an important friend of the United States. And we've got a relationship to maintain, and we will maintain it.

Iraq

Q. Mr. President, you put a formal request to Britain and other countries to supply troops—

President Bush. Have we?

Q. —for a possible conflict in Iraq.

President Bush. Is that a question, have we, or an asserted statement?

Q. I understood you had—

President Bush. Oh, I see.

Q. —and I wonder what your expectation was of what Britain might do.

President Bush. Well, my expectation is, is that we can do this peacefully, if Saddam Hussein disarms. That's my expectation. Saddam Hussein has got a decision to make: Will he uphold the agreement that he has made? And if he chooses to do so by disarming peacefully, the world will be better off for it. If he chooses not to disarm, we will work with our close friends, the closest of which is Great Britain, and we will disarm him. But our first choice is not to use the military option. Our first choice is for Mr. Saddam Hussein to disarm. And that's where we'll be devoting a lot of our energies.

Q. And Prime Minister, you have this request now. You also seem to have a prospect of another fire strike as well. Do you believe that many British troops and reserves are going to have to prepare for a Christmas away from their family celebra-

tion in either fighting fires or fighting Saddam Hussein?

Prime Minister Blair. We will do what's necessary, both to secure ourselves at home and to make sure that the will of the United Nations is enforced abroad. And I think what you will find here at this NATO summit is a totally united determination on behalf of the international community, reflected in the unanimous United Nations resolution, that Saddam Hussein has to disarm himself of all weapons of mass destruction. And how that happens is a choice for him.

We hope and want it to happen through the United Nations inspectors mandated by the whole of the international community. But if he fails to cooperate with them, if he fails to do all he can—and it is within his power—to help that process of disarmament through the United Nations, then he will be disarmed by force. And that is the clear will of the international community. And I think you will find now that there is a consensus for that position virtually right across the civilized world.

Q. Thank you all very much.

President Bush. Sure. I'm glad to answer your every request. [*Laughter*]

Q. How about our every question?

President Bush. I don't want you to get used to asking too many questions. I've been answering them all the whole time I've been here, question after question after question. If you were to ask a question, Stretch, what would it have been, so I can think about it for tomorrow? I won't answer it now.

Usama bin Laden

Q. What's your reaction to the confirmation of bin Laden being alive on the tape?

President Bush. Thank you. I've got a formulated answer. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:07 a.m. at the Prague Congress Center. In his remarks,

he referred to Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of Germany; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A portion of these remarks could

not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks at the North Atlantic Council Summit in Prague November 21, 2002

America is very pleased by today's decision. We believe it strengthens our Nation's most important alliance, NATO. By welcoming seven members, we will not only add to our military capabilities; we will refresh the spirit of this great democratic Alliance.

We believe today's decision reaffirms our commitment to freedom and our commitment to a Europe which is whole and free and at peace.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:03 a.m. at the Prague Congress Center.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Vladimir Putin of Russia and an Exchange With Reporters in St. Petersburg, Russia November 22, 2002

President Putin. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. In your presence may I once again cordially welcome the President of the United States and his team to Russia.

We are very pleased that Mr. President accepted our invitation. And let me say that our conversations—and this is exactly the way I'd like to quote this meeting—our conversation on the whole range of our bilateral issues and our cooperation in the international arena have been very productive and very, very frank.

And we discussed practically everything between the sky and the Earth. We discussed our cooperation in the energy sector, our energy dialog. We discussed our cooperation in the high technology sector. We also—[inaudible]—the problem of NATO expansion and the development of relations between Russia and NATO. And of course, we also addressed the problem of terrorism. And of course, we also dis-

cussed the prospects for our cooperation on the matters of strategic stability.

I think that Mr. President will agree with me—and he'll have an opportunity to say what he thinks on this—but I think he'll agree with me that our meeting, in this point a very frank meeting, without prepared statements, has been very productive and has been very fruitful.

President Bush. Yes, it has. I consider Vladimir Putin one of my good friends.

Are you going to translate?

Like other good friends I've had throughout my life, we don't agree 100 percent of the time. But we always agree to discuss things in a frank and—in a frank way.

Every time I come to St. Petersburg, he keeps showing me more and more beautiful rooms. So I'm coming back next May. I always enjoy our conversations.

I have just come from NATO. My visit with Vladimir was my first stop after Prague. The mood of the NATO countries is this: Russia is our friend; we've got a